

CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 25(CRA)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

EIGHTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Offered: 4/2/93
Referred: RULES

Sponsor(s): SENATE RULES COMMITTEE BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the federal government to recognize the dire water and sanitation
2 conditions in rural Alaska and to become a full partner with this state in
3 improving this health-threatening situation.

4 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

5 WHEREAS Alaskans living in over 135 rural communities throughout the state have
6 substandard and inadequate water and sewer facilities; and

7 WHEREAS this lack of basic facilities results in many of these rural Alaskans having
8 to drink untreated water from ponds, creeks, or rivers and having to use a bucket as a toilet
9 or an outhouse as a bathroom facility; and

10 WHEREAS this lack of basic facilities often results in uncontained sewage pooling
11 in close vicinity to homes, in liquid wastes leaching into the waters used for drinking, and in
12 exposing children to raw sewage in their play areas; and

13 WHEREAS this lack of basic facilities is causing a critical human health and safety
14 crisis in rural Alaska as evidenced by an alarmingly high incidence of potentially life-
15 threatening diseases, such as hepatitis A and meningitis; and

16 WHEREAS Alaska's rural population is projected to double by the year 2010, further

1 compounding this health crisis and exposing many rural residents to diseases that would be
2 preventable with basic sanitation facilities; and

3 **WHEREAS** rural Alaska has a history of cycles of waterborne disease epidemics
4 stemming from unsafe water and sanitation systems, and state epidemiologists report hepatitis
5 A is currently beginning another new cycle of that disease; and

6 **WHEREAS** the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
7 continues to design and build homes in rural Alaska without adequate provision for safe
8 sewage disposal or in-home drinking water; and

9 **WHEREAS** the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Environmental
10 Conservation established the Alaska Sanitation Task Force, consisting of 27 federal, state,
11 Native, and regional organizations, to analyze these important issues and provide
12 recommendations for action; and

13 **WHEREAS** the implementation of the recommendations of the Alaska Sanitation Task
14 Force involves the joint commitment of the state, local and federal governments to improve
15 the living standards, public health, and quality of life of rural Alaskans; and

16 **WHEREAS** the governor has directed the commissioner of the Alaska Department of
17 Environmental Conservation and commissioners of other affected state departments to use their
18 best efforts to utilize available resources to address this critical health problem; and

19 **WHEREAS** the Alaska State Legislature recognizes the important work done by the
20 Alaska Sanitation Task Force and urges early implementation of the task force's findings and
21 recommendations by the state government in partnership with the federal government, local
22 government, Native regional corporations, and others to address these challenges; and

23 **WHEREAS** this state effort will not be successful without the commitment of the
24 federal government to meet its responsibilities and obligations to these rural residents, many
25 of whom are Alaska Natives; and

26 **WHEREAS** the federal government, through the United States Environmental
27 Protection Agency, has the capacity to assist in correcting the sanitation conditions in rural
28 Alaska as exemplified by its ongoing efforts in other areas of the country such as the
29 American Southwest Colonias where border town communities are receiving assistance in
30 establishing basic water and sewage facilities; and

31 **WHEREAS** a national effort similar to that currently being undertaken in the
32 American Southwest Colonias will enable accelerated transformation for residents in rural

1 Alaska from substandard sanitation conditions.

2 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the
3 President of the United States to direct the administrator of the United States Environmental
4 Protection Agency to join in a partnership with the State of Alaska to finance and implement
5 a long-term, comprehensive effort to improve sanitation conditions in rural Alaska; and be it

6 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the
7 President of the United States to ask the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States
8 Department of Housing and Urban Development, the United States Department of Health and
9 Human Services, the United States Department of the Interior, the United States Department
10 of Education, the United States Department of Labor, the United States Department of
11 Transportation, the United States Department of Energy, the United States Department of
12 Agriculture, the United States Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration,
13 the Office of Management and Budget, and ACTION to commit available finances and
14 resources necessary to improve the water and sanitation conditions in rural Alaska by
15 implementing the recommendations of the Alaska Sanitation Task Force.

16 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Bill Clinton, President of the
17 United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton, First Lady, Mike Espy, Secretary of Agriculture;
18 Ronald Brown, Secretary of Commerce; Richard W. Riley, Secretary of Education; Hazel R.
19 O'Leary, Secretary of Energy; Donna E. Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services;
20 Henry G. Cisneros, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Bruce Babbitt, Secretary
21 of the Interior; Robert B. Reich, Secretary of Labor; Frederico Pena, Secretary of
22 Transportation; Carol M. Browner, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency;
23 Leon E. Panetta, Director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget; Patricia F. Saiki,
24 Administrator of the Small Business Administration; John Seal, Acting Director of ACTION;
25 and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, United States
26 Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, United States Representative, members of the Alaska
27 delegation in Congress.